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ABSTRACT

Focused state efforts have helped teacher salaries in Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states move toward the national average. Preliminary 2000-01 estimates put SREB's average teacher salary at its highest point in 22 years compared to the national average. The SREB average teacher salary is approximately 90 percent of the national average. Delaware and Maryland have average teacher salaries above the national average. Many SREB states have adopted goals to raise teacher pay over several years. Average salaries in Georgia and North Carolina increased steadily because of multi-year commitments. South Carolina continued its long-term commitment to maintain its salary average at or above the southeastern average. Mississippi passed legislation to increase average teacher salaries 29 percent by year 2005-06. Delaware passed an educator accountability plan in 2000 which included a new, increased salary schedule. Arkansas adopted a 2-year plan to raise teacher pay by $3,000. In Maryland, salary increases are determined through collective bargaining. Nearly all SREB states provide bonuses to teachers who earn national certification. Louisiana's legislature planned to give teachers a $2,000 raise in 2001-02. The Oklahoma legislature approved a $3,000 pay raise for 2000-01. In most SREB states, average salaries improve when cost of living is considered. (SM)

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Focus *on Teacher Salaries: An Update on Average Salaries and Recent Legislative Actions in the SREB States*

SREB

Gale F. Gaines

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Teacher salaries in SREB states continue to gain ground on the national average due to focused state efforts to raise educator pay.

Preliminary estimates for 2000-2001 put SREB's average teacher salary at its highest point in more than 22 years when compared to the national average — the SREB average teacher salary is estimated to be 90 percent of the national average. Salary averages for teachers in two states, Delaware and Maryland, remain above the national average; Georgia and North Carolina are closing in on that target

A number of SREB states have adopted goals to raise teacher pay over several years — to the national average, regional average or by a certain amount or percentage. These multi-year efforts are expensive and current economic conditions in the region may impact the ability of states to reach salary goals as quickly as originally planned.

Several SREB states have concluded their 2001 legislative sessions and a few have been able to fund teacher pay raises of about 2 to 4 percent in 2001-2002. About half of the 16 SREB states still are deliberating their 2001-2002 budgets. Updates on actions in those states will appear in the SREB Legislative Report series.

Much attention is given to salary averages each year, particularly as new national data are released. It is important to keep in mind that comparing salary averages is one way to assess progress on goals from year to year. However, changes in salary averages are influenced by a number of factors beyond annual pay raises — factors such as the retirement of veteran teachers, the employment of new teachers and the addition of new teaching positions. Some of these issues are summarized in SREB's *Focus on Teacher Salaries: What Teacher Salary Averages Don't Show.*

Update on salary goals

Average salaries in Georgia and North Carolina have increased steadily in relation to the national average because of the multi-year commitments in those states. Since Georgia's goal to reach the national average was adopted in 1995, the average teacher salary in the state has risen from $32,291 to $41,023 in 1999-2000, an increase of 27 percent (compared to 14 percent for the nation). During that time, the average went from 88.2 percent to 98.3 percent of the national average. Preliminary salary information for 2000-2001 indicates that the Georgia average is $42,216 (98.4 percent of the national average). The General Assembly included funds in the 2001-2002 budget for 4.5 percent increases to the state minimum salary schedule.

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Support for North Carolina's 1997 goal to reach the national average has resulted in a 26.5 percent increase in the average between 1997 and 2000, compared to a national increase of 8.3 percent. The average salary has risen from $31,167 (80.8 percent of the national average) in 1997 to $39,419 (94.5 percent of the national average) in 2000. Estimates for 2000-2001 put the average at $41,167 — 96 percent of the national average. These increases have been tied to the state's accountability system and include across-the-board raises and bonuses for teachers who mentor, earn national certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or earn advanced state certification.

South Carolina has continued its long-term commitment to maintain its salary average at or above the Southeastern average. The governor now wants the average teacher pay to reach the national average in six years. Alabama, too, is aiming for the national average and legislation passed in 2000 ties pay raises to revenue growth. Teachers will not receive raises in 2001-2002 because revenue is not expected to grow by the required 3.5 percent.

In 2000, Mississippi passed legislation to increase the average salary of teachers 29 percent by 2005-2006. This plan also is tied to revenue growth — if revenues do not grow enough each year, the Legislature is not required to provide raises. Teachers will receive raises averaging 2.7 percent in 2001-2002.

Average teacher salaries by rank

1989-1990			1994-1995			1999-2000		
1	MD	$36,319	1	MD	$40,661	1	DE	$44,435
2	DE	33,337	2	DE	39,076	2	MD	44,048
3	VA	30,938	3	VA	33,987	3	GA	41,023
4	FL	28,803	4	FL	32,588	4	NC	39,419
5	GA	28,006	5	TN	32,477	5	VA	38,690
6	NC	27,883	6	GA	32,291	6	TX	37,567
7	TX	27,496	7	KY	32,257	7	FL	36,722
8	SC	27,217	8	WV	31,944	8	AL	36,689
9	TN	27,052	9	TX	31,223	9	KY	36,380
10	KY	26,292	10	AL	31,144	10	TN	36,328
11	AL	25,300	11	NC	30,793	11	SC	36,091
12	LA	24,300	12	SC	30,279	12	WV	35,008
13	MS	24,292	13	AR	28,934	13	AR	33,386
14	OK	23,070	14	OK	28,172	14	LA	33,109
15	WV	22,842	15	MS	26,818	15	MS	31,857
16	AR	22,352	16	LA	26,461	16	OK	31,298

Sources: National Education Association, *Rankings of the States* and *Estimates of the School Statistics*, various years.

Delaware passed an educator accountability plan in 2000. The plan included a new salary schedule that will increase pay for beginning and experienced teachers. Beginning salaries are scheduled to increase by up to 10 percent over three years. Teachers can earn supplements of 2 percent to 6 percent for gaining additional skills and knowledge and up to $1,500 for taking on additional responsibilities. Bonuses for teachers who earn national certification were raised to 12 percent annually and performance rewards to schools — which are available for the first time in 2001-2002 — can be used for salary supplements.

Other legislative actions

During this year's session, Arkansas adopted a two-year plan to raise teacher pay by $3,000. The biennial budget for 2001-2003 allocates funds for $1,000 raises in the first year of the biennium and $2,000 raises in the second year. This should raise average teacher pay by about 9 percent over the biennium. In addition, a tax law passed in 1991 that expanded and raised sales taxes required districts to use these additional revenues to increase the pay of certified personnel.

In Maryland, salary increases are determined through collective bargaining. The budgets for 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 included state funds to provide a 1 percent pay raise for teachers in districts that increase pay by at least 4 percent. The goal was to raise pay for teachers by at least 10 percent over two years. Legislation passed during the 2001 session calls for this matching program to continue in 2002-2003.

Nearly all SREB states provide bonuses to teachers who earn national certification. These awards range from $1,000 annually for the 10-year life of the certificate to $7,500 each year. West Virginia's bonus will increase in 2001-2002 to $2,500 (from $1,000). Arkansas passed legislation in 2001 to raise the initial bonus provided to teachers with national certification to $5,000 (up from $3,000) and the annual bonus to $3,000 (up from $2,000). Maryland has authorized bonuses of $2,000 (to be matched with local funds) for up to 300 teachers who receive national certification. Legislation this year raises the eligibility to 500 teachers.

Louisiana's Legislature still is in session but plans are proceeding to provide teachers with a raise of about $2,000 in 2001-2002. Tennessee's Legislature still is meeting. The governor in that state has proposed a 3 percent raise for teachers. Florida's session has ended — the budget for 2001-2002 earmarks funds for $850 bonuses to help keep teachers from leaving the profession. General teacher pay raises are determined through collective bargaining. The West Virginia Legislature approved $1,000 pay raises for teachers in 2001-2002, an increase of about 2.8 percent, and extra pay for teachers with more than 30 years of experience.

In 2000, the Oklahoma Legislature approved a $3,000 teacher pay raise for 2000-2001. This 10 percent increase is estimated to raise the average salary from $31,298 in 1999-2000 to about $34,400 in 2000-2001. No additional raises were included in the budget for 2001-2002. Texas gave teachers a $3,000 raise in 1999-2000. In 2001-2002, the state is expecting to begin a state health plan for teachers — previously, local districts offered health benefits. Kentucky passed legislation in 2000 calling for a report on pay and benefits for teachers by September 2001.

Average salaries for teachers in the SREB states, 1999-2000

	Average salary 1999-2000	Percent change 1990 to 2000	Percent change 1995 to 2000	Percent change 1999 to 2000
United States	$41,724	33.0%	14.0%	2.8%
SREB states	37,358	35.7	18.0	4.8
SREB states as a percentge of nation	89.5			
Alabama	36,689	45.0	17.8	2.4
Arkansas	33,386	49.4	15.4	3.3
Delaware	44,435	33.3	13.7	2.9
Florida	36,722	27.5	12.7	2.2
Georgia	41,023	46.5	27.0	3.4
Kentucky	36,380	38.4	12.8	2.4
Louisiana	33,109	36.3	25.1	2.2
Maryland	44,048	21.3	8.3	2.2
Mississippi	31,857	31.1	18.8	7.9
North Carolina	39,419	41.4	28.0	6.9
Oklahoma	31,298	35.7	11.1	0.6
South Carolina	36,091	32.6	19.2	4.6
Tennessee	36,328	34.3	11.9	2.4
Texas	37,567	36.6	20.3	9.4
Virginia	38,690	25.1	13.8	3.1
West Virginia	35,008	53.3	9.6	2.2

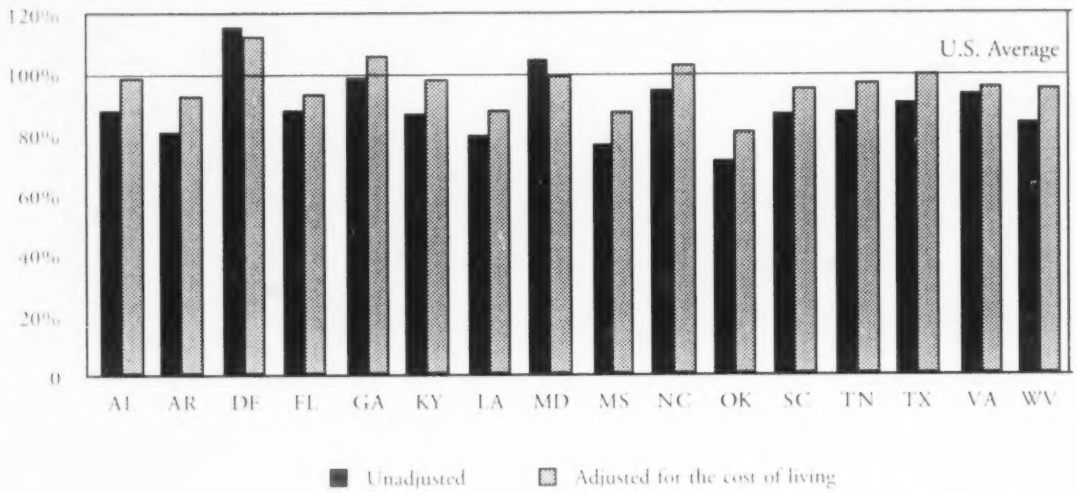
Sources: National Education Association, *Rankings of the States* and *Estimates of the School Statistics*, various years.

Cost of living affects salary averages

The latest information on the effect of the cost of living on salary averages confirms that in 14 of the 16 SREB states, average salaries improve when cost of living is considered. Delaware and Maryland are the two SREB states where the average cost of living exceeds the nation's average. In these two states the value of the average salary declines when living costs are considered.

When adjusted for the cost of living, Delaware's average salary remains above the national average, Georgia's and North Carolina's averages jump above the national average salary and Maryland's drops below the national average. Texas' adjusted average is just below the national average and all other SREB states remain below that level.

Average teacher salaries in the SREB states as a percentage of the U.S. average and adjusted for the cost of living in each state, 2000



Source: American Federation of Teachers, *Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends, 2000.*

Other SREB reports on teacher compensation:

- *Beyond Salaries: Employee Benefits for Teachers in the SREB States*
- *Focus on Teacher Salaries: What Teacher Salary Averages Don't Show*
- *SREB Legislative Reports*
- *SREB States Lead the Way in National Board Certification*
- *Teacher Salaries and State Priorities for Educational Quality: A Vital Link*

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